

# Plaintiffs' Opposition to Defendant's Motion to Dismiss Exhibit E



# TORCH NETWORK

UNCATEGORIZED

## Concerning Antifash Gordon: A Torch Statement In Solidarity With Victims Of Abuse

Posted on April 9, 2021 by [Torch Antifa Network](#)

Today, a group of antifascist activists anonymously published a statement in which they describe harmful and exploitative patterns of interpersonal and organizing behavior from the individual known in the antifascist community as "AntiFash Gordon." See this statement here: <https://antifashgordon.noblogs.org/>

As a network we have spoken to the authors of that piece and multiple people who have been harmed by Gordon. The accounts from those individuals show a clear pattern of emotional and financial abuse. We have supported some of those individuals through their process of writing the statement, linked above, relating their experiences and concerns. As members of the Torch Network, we believe that abuse has no place in our organizing community. In addition to supporting the affected individuals, we wanted to address specific issues we have seen and experienced with Antifash Gordon's brand of antifascist activism, since we believe these issues to be directly related to his abusive patterns of behavior.

To the best of our knowledge, Gordon's abusive patterns of behavior do not compromise the accuracy of information on fascist activity published by the Antifash Gordon account. Antifascist organizing would be much less complicated if abusive individuals were always bad at practical tasks related to activism. It's important that antifascists are able to acknowledge when exploitative behavior and useful/advantageous skills coexist, without getting derailed by claims that any one individual is too "important to the movement" to be subject to public critique or censure.

### **Interpersonal and Partner Abuse Overview**

EXE001

For a more in-depth account of many of Gordon's harmful interpersonal behaviors, please see the statement linked above. The following is meant to offer a brief summary, based on both the contents of that statement and our own information-gathering efforts.

AntiFash Gordon's harmful and/or abusive patterns of behavior towards housemates/partners have included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Repeated boundary violations and manipulation/coercion
- Ableist and demeaning treatment
- Treating housemates and/or partners also involved in antifascist research as a labor source while they're under his individual "tutelage"—often prescribing them work he deems "basic" or menial labor, and then berating them for endangering the "social capital" of his personal brand if they fail to finish those tasks correctly or as fast as he demands
- Financial abuse of housemates/partners:
  - Utilizing his ability to provide financial assistance/resources as a tool for isolating vulnerable people from their other support networks, from possible sources of income that are independent of him, and so on.
  - Changing the terms of this financial assistance, often when his relationship with the individual in question changes, i.e. asking to be repaid for financial assistance that he originally described as "mutual aid" or a gift.
- Misrepresentation and exploitation of his influence within the online antifascist scene to silence those he's harmed:
  - Exaggerating his influence and position within antifascist circles in conversations with victims of his abuse, to convince them that they aren't safe talking to other antifascists about his treatment of them.
  - When blocked or cut off from contacting people he's harmed/pressured, utilizing his networks to inundate those individuals with requests/demands for contact, for explanation, or for the targeted individual to do what he demands.

It's our job as organizers to ensure that survivors of interpersonal abuse feel safe and heard in antifascist spaces. No one individual is inherently entitled to a position of authority/influence within the antifascist community, regardless of their other behavior and history. No one individual is innately invaluable or necessary to antifascist organizing. Groups, collectives, or individuals with substantial public followings should be held to a higher standard of responsibility and care with regard to their online and offline conduct. It's similarly important to be especially critical of, and have high standards for, any person or any group attempting to serve as a conduit for connecting new or less-experienced/connected individuals interested in antifascism with ongoing activism. The power imbalance within those organizing relationships make them particularly ripe for abuse.

### **Harmful and Unethical Organizing Tactics**

EXE002



During the course of our own work as antifascists, as well as in our conversations with individuals harmed by Antifash Gordon, it has become obvious that he operates as an activist in ways that parallel his patterns of interpersonal abuse. Our decision to write and publish this statement was due in part to our desire to clarify the problematic nature of Antifash Gordon's organizing model for people who may be less familiar with activist circles and community antifascist work. The following sections outline a few relevant examples:

**1. AntiFash Gordon claims to personally hold and operate in terms of antifascist, liberatory principles. Simultaneously, he behaves (both on his public social media, and in private) in ways that directly contradict said principles and reinforce his own status.**

Gordon has noted more than once that "[s]ome cis white dude who creates this hero figure out of himself is exactly what we [presumably antifascists] don't need". He acknowledged in interviews that the research published on the AntiFash Gordon account is generated by an entire team of researchers, of which he is only one. At any point in the last few years, Gordon could easily have re-named and re-framed his original Twitter account so that it no longer presented itself as the account of a white cis man publishing solo doxxes of fascists while using a cartoon-superhero-pun pseudonym. Similarly, it would be a simple matter to edit that account's "Bio" section so that the collective labor behind its prolific publication of individual doxxes was acknowledged, or even emphasized. If Antifash Gordon knows that white cis male activists using antifascist work and community to cultivate their own personal brands on social media is the opposite of what antifascism needs, it remains unclear why he hasn't stopped doing that. In addition to continually centering himself despite benefiting from collective labor, Gordon often treats public critiques of his online persona, choices, and statements as personal attacks warranting vitriolic reactions. For someone who claims to hold long-time antifascist organizers and community-based self-defense in high esteem, Antifash Gordon spends an unusual amount of time and energy treating any critiques of his social media account as though they are fascist attacks against antifascism as a movement.

As has already been outlined in the [statement](#) we linked to above, Antifash Gordon has repeatedly reacted to accusations—and even subtle implications—that he has engaged in abusive or harmful behavior by immediately professing his willingness to engage in formalized accountability processes. To be clear, there is absolutely nothing bad—and much that is commendable—about people actively taking steps to repair harm that they've caused, and unlearn abusive or toxic patterns of behavior. That said, the type of formalized accountability processes that take place within radical organizing spaces are intended as a kind of final resort for addressing complex, extensive, or particularly stubborn interpersonal conflicts and abuses. The first and most basic step in halting and eventually undoing harm is for the perpetrator to listen to and respect needs of the person they have harmed. Consequently, when a person reacts to someone bringing up their harmful behavior by immediately requesting a formal accountability process, it is, in a sense, the radical activist equivalent of demanding to speak to someone's "manager." The perpetrator is making clear that they are only willing to work on repairing what they've done if someone other than their victim(s) decides that such work is really necessary. It's a clear assertion of power, particularly in situations where the perpetrator has substantially greater social capital and personal resources than their victim(s). In one fell swoop, a man like Antifash Gordon who is accused of abusive behavior can polish his "good ally" reputation and force his accuser to choose between entering into a process their



abuser is already dictating, or refusing to engage with said process and subsequently losing substantial “credibility” as a victim.

**2. The antifascist “celebrity” persona that Gordon has continued to cultivate for himself runs counter to numerous long-standing antifascist principles, and he regularly uses his privileged access to media figures and resources to manipulate and exploit other antifascists.**

Antifash Gordon has, for a long time, implied that his role as a publicly-identified “antifa celebrity” is a kind of burden that he chooses to bear so that he can be of service to more marginalized antifascists. He has, for example, recently stated that part of his reasoning behind forming a non-profit organization was that it seemed like the best way for him to use his newly exposed real identity to help further the antifascist cause. This “Don’t worry, I’ll use my power to uplift others!” routine is a classic misdirection tactic often used by privileged individuals who want to appear equitable and self-effacing without actually relinquishing any of the power or resources they have accumulated.

The logic behind that argument is usually that by acting as a respectable (usually white and/or moneyed), well-connected representative of their community/movement, this privileged individual will be able to funnel the resources and opportunities they can access to those who need them more. In Antifash Gordon’s case this involves him acting as the arbiter and distributor of research information, media opportunities, and financial resources to other antifascists, often those in his “inner circle” of close friends and allies. But no individual needs to occupy this kind of a role within any radical community; instituting hierarchy simply in order to appeal to mainstream biases and respectability only benefits those who end up on top.

Gordon’s position of power and influence allows him to frequently pressure other antifascists into engaging with social media, the public, and press in ways that they aren’t comfortable with security-wise, and that make them feel unsafe. Gordon typically dresses up his violations of other activists’ boundaries as “expert advice” on antifascist practice, or as rare opportunities for press attention or income that he’s passing on to less prominent researchers. But as time passes, his coercive tactics typically turn out to instead be part of a larger plan for developing those individuals as labor sources, or “brands,” that will help boost Gordon’s own profile and projects. Activists who Antifash Gordon has exploited in this manner describe him initially flattering them, providing them with needed personal/financial support, and then convincing them to start working on a project or learning the research trade from him. Once fully on-board and emotionally and/or materially dependent on Gordon to some degree, these activists found themselves in a deeply unequal working relationship, where their operational security concerns, personal needs, and core principles were regularly dismissed or minimized by Gordon in pursuit of his own personal ambitions.

Antifascists have been figuring out ways to get what they need, support each other, and shut shit down since long before “Antifash Gordon” even existed. Communities do not need the help of a celebrity in order to advocate for and defend themselves. If anyone, even someone who presents themselves as an authority on antifascist work, tells you that organizing with “radicals” who treat you like an expendable employee is a necessary step in becoming “an activist,” they are lying.

EXE004

**3. Gordon has a pattern of using radical language and processes as tools to pressure less-prominent groups and individuals into doing what he wants rather than what they have decided on autonomously.**

Over a period of a few months during the past year, Antifash Gordon contacted numerous smaller antifascist crews, at the request of an abusive individual organizing on the other side of the country, whom those crews had privately cut ties with. Gordon suggested to each crew that they undergo a mediation process—facilitated by him—so that they could resume working with this individual. When he contacted the crews in question, he stated that he had no idea what their reasons had been for cutting ties with the individual he was advocating for. Over the first few weeks of his efforts, multiple groups told Gordon about this individual's abusive behavior. Despite receiving these accounts of abuse from multiple groups, Gordon contacted additional antifascist crews with the same suggestion for at least another month. The primary goal of Gordon's proposed mediation process was, in each case, to get people to “start sharing intel again” with the individual who had harmed them—whom Gordon just happened to work and share information with himself.

Gordon only stopped this private pressure campaign after he tried contacting an antifascist group with a significant degree of community presence and respect. That group ended up responding and telling Gordon that it was unethical for him to use his position as a supposed antifascist “authority” to advocate on behalf of a toxic and abusive activist. To us, Gordon's actions throughout this series of events show a fundamental disregard for, and misunderstanding of, both effective accountability processes and autonomous, non-hierarchical organizing.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the contents of the recently-published statement on Antifash Gordon we linked at the beginning of this piece, our various experiences with Gordon in antifascist spaces, and our own information gathering from affected individuals, Torch has come to the following decisions regarding Antifash Gordon going forward:

- **Torch Network chapters will not knowingly collaborate with AFG on research or other projects.**
- **Torch Network chapters will no longer share, retweet, or promote any of AFG's social media profiles or posts.**

The choice to not share/promote an individual or organization's work is one that we take very seriously, and make for specific reasons. In this case, we made this choice because:

1. Antifash Gordon is engaging in antifascist work in a way that we consider to be directly antithetical to our shared principles, and
2. Antifash Gordon has repeatedly used his prominence as an antifascist researcher to enable/excuse him causing harm to vulnerable individuals. We do not want to contribute to his ability to abuse anyone or cause harm to our community.

Signed,

Torch Network

EXE005

## Torch Antifa Network

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